



**ABC**  
Television

REVIEW INTO  
THE FORMAT AND PRODUCTION MODEL OF  
**CATALYST**

October 2016

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 Background.....	3
1.2 Recommendations.....	3
<b>2. The <i>Catalyst</i> Review .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Terms of Reference.....	4
2.2 Review Working Group .....	4
2.3 Project Methodology .....	4
2.4 <i>Catalyst</i> Performance Summary.....	5
2.5 Audience Insights research findings .....	6
2.6 The State of the ABC – research findings relevant to <i>Catalyst</i> .....	6
2.7 ABC Science Reference Panel.....	7
2.8 Stakeholder engagement within the Scientific Community.....	7
2.8.1 Summary of findings from the Scientific community / stakeholder interviews: .....	8
2.9 Consultation with the <i>Catalyst</i> team: .....	9
<b>3. The New <i>Catalyst</i>.....</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 What should a premium science brand look like in 2017 and the years ahead? .....	10
3.2 The new <i>Catalyst</i> .....	10
3.3 Financial Summary .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Attachment A - Benchmarking international science shows. ....	11
Attachment B – <i>Catalyst</i> Research (Quality & Distinciveness pilot) through YourSpace .....	13
Attachment C – Stakeholder comments .....	18

# 1. Executive Summary

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## 1.1 BACKGROUND

Science is a Priority Specialist Genre for the ABC. On television, *Catalyst*, is the flagship program that has been on-air since 2001 replacing *Quantum*.

After 15 years in production, ABC Television has conducted a review into the format and production model of *Catalyst* (the Review) to better align it with ABC's strategic direction and respond to declining audiences. Two recent editorial breaches were also fed into the process.

The Review sought input from a range of stakeholders including staff, key internal and external science stakeholders and the audience.

The Review found that the credibility and standing of the *Catalyst* brand is strong with both the general public and the scientific community, but that important changes need to be made to make it relevant and sustainable into the future.

All stakeholders consulted in this Review perceived *Catalyst* to be an important program and expressed a strong desire for the ABC to be “bolder” and “to create a world class science brand” that can bring the world of science to Australians.

## 1.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of this Review, Television recommends that the ABC retains the *Catalyst* brand, but shift editorial focus from the current half-hour magazine style program structure to a high quality one-hour documentary format.

The Review also recommends the ABC adopts a new more flexible production methodology using expert scientific talent assigned to each issue to ensure scientific rigour and credibility.

To increase editorial supervision and deliver strong leadership to the show, consideration should be given to establishing a small internal production team at the core of the programme led by a highly credible and experienced Executive Producer.

The program should continue to be controlled internally to allow retention of intellectual property (IP), to maximise commercial returns and control the digital rights into the future.

Further detail on the new recommended model for *Catalyst* can be found in Section [3](#).

## 2. The *Catalyst* Review

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### 2.1 TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Has the content in *Catalyst* covered a broad, popular range of scientific topics of interest to the Australian public?
2. What do Australian audiences expect from science programming?
3. What do current audiences think of *Catalyst*?
4. What format structure allows *Catalyst* to deliver the best outcome for broadcast and digital audiences in the years ahead?
5. What is the ideal staff structure to deliver a strong *Catalyst* that includes a range of voices and perspectives?
6. What is the best financial model to meet needs on all platforms?
7. Does the current structure of *Catalyst* best utilise scientific knowledge within the ABC?
8. What options and benefits exist to work with likeminded international science programming?
9. How can *Catalyst* maintain quality and accuracy of storytelling?
10. How should *Catalyst* handle subject matter of possible contention?
11. How to improve diversity in front of and behind the camera?
12. What is / should be *Catalyst*'s mission statement?

### 2.2 REVIEW WORKING GROUP

This project was guided by a Working Group who developed a methodology to interrogate the Terms of Reference.

The Working Group on the *Catalyst* Review consisted of:

PROJECT LEADS: Brendan Dahill (Head of Non-Scripted Production) & Steve Bibb (Head of Factual)

PROJECT RESEARCHERS: Sharon Bruce (Production Executive, TV Factual), Michael O'Neill (Commissioning Editor, TV Factual), Sarah Harmelink (Manager, Policy & Communications TV)

PROJECT ADVISOR: Alan Sunderland (Director Editorial Policies)

PROJECT SPONSOR: Richard Finlayson (Director Television)

### 2.3 PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The *Catalyst* Review analysed and incorporated evidence from the following sources:

- Audience research through YourSpace – Audience Insights: project briefed in through Robert Barnfield (Insights Manager – Primary Research, ABC Audience & Marketing).
- Stakeholder analysis – Project Lead conducted interviews with eight key stakeholders and experts from inside and outside the ABC.

- **External scientific stakeholders:**
  - **Fiona Stanley** – former ABC Board member
  - **Ian Chubb** – neuroscientist and academic. Former Chief Scientist of Australia from 2011 to 2016.
  - **Professor Suzanne Cory** - Research Professor in the Molecular Genetics of Cancer Division at The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute and a Vice-Chancellor's Fellow of The University of Melbourne.
  - **Professor Stephen Simpson** - Academic Director of the Charles Perkins Centre, and a Professor in the School of Life and Environmental Sciences at the University of Sydney, and Executive Director of Obesity Australia.
- **Internal scientific stakeholders:**
  - **Dr Norman Swan** - Producer and presenter of the Health Report, multi-award winning producer and broadcaster.
  - **Jonathan Webb** – Radio National Director of Content, Science and Health.
  - **Robyn Williams** – Science journalist and broadcaster / presenter of RN's The Science Show and Ockham's Razor.
  - **Dr Karl Kruszelnicki** – Australia's most well-known and respected science communicator / presenter. The voice of science on triple j and the author of many popular books relating to science.
- **Staff consultation** session conducted by the Project Lead, Brendan Dahill
- Financial modelling (comparing the current costs of producing *Catalyst* with other production alternatives).
- Benchmarking science journalism / programming of international public broadcasters (via desktop research and face-to-face meetings by the Project Lead with key executives) (See comments at [Attachment A](#)).
- Review ABC Science Reference Panel recommendations.

## 2.4 CATALYST PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

On a **quantitative** basis, *Catalyst* has been a reasonably consistent performer over the last few years, attracting a consolidated (5 city metro) audience of just shy of 700,000 viewers. The current series shows a softening of numbers – possibly due to the shift to Tuesday nights in 2016.

Year/series	Ratings (5 city metro consolidated)
2013 Series 14	689,449 viewers
2014 Series 15	690,832
2015 Series 16	682,000
2016 Series 17 (year to date)	640,000

78% of *Catalyst*'s audience is aged 50+, broadly in line with ABC main channels' average primetime profile (80% aged 50+).

## 2.5 AUDIENCE INSIGHTS RESEARCH FINDINGS

To gather qualitative perspectives, we invited our viewers to comment on *Catalyst* through two separate surveys.

The most recent study was conducted by our Audience Insights team on 20 September 2016 with questions fielded through the ABC community panel and answered by 141 respondents. (See [Attachment B](#)).

### What do Australian audiences expect from science programming?

From the research we can see that *Catalyst* plays a major role in the delivery of science reporting to the Australian community, with 92% of those who watched the show feeling that *Catalyst* does a good job of reporting science based issues.

Respondents acknowledge there are limited alternatives for science programming on TV, so *Catalyst*'s role is very important. (See comments at [Attachment C<sup>1</sup>](#)).

### What do current audiences think of *Catalyst*?

The *Catalyst* episode used in research, "Smell Our Most Underestimated Sense" tested well, with the audience rating it on average an **8.1 out of 10**, and a **Net Promoter Score of 34**. This puts it in line with *Gardening Australia* (35) and *Foreign Correspondent* (33) outperforming other factual programs like *Australian Story* (27) and *Compass* (19) as measured in the 2015 Q&D Research.

The program received a **Quality** score of **92%**, and **79% for Distinctiveness**. Its strengths were that it was informative (96%) and well presented (92%).

*Catalyst* is liked for a variety of reasons. It is a trusted source of information for scientific breakthroughs and does a good job (for most) in explaining complex ideas.

The variety of topics reported on is important, as is the mix of presenters. (See comments at [Attachment C<sup>2</sup>](#)).

Audiences' tastes for science content differ and there is a balance required between hard science and entertainment. While those with little knowledge of science appreciate its simplicity, for some aficionados it can be lightweight. (See comments at [Attachment C<sup>3</sup>](#)).

### How to improve diversity in front of and behind the camera?

Highlighting the challenge of diversity, only 31% felt the episode *Smell, Our Most Underestimated Sense* reflected Australia's cultural diversity.

## 2.6 THE STATE OF THE ABC – RESEARCH FINDINGS RELEVANT TO CATALYST

In the second piece of qualitative research, "The state of the ABC", *Catalyst* was the 10<sup>th</sup> most popular show on the ABC (with 13% of those surveyed saying it was one of their favourites).

This survey solicited feedback from a broad spectrum of respondents across all age ranges. Respondents were asked a range of questions such as: Has the ABC

improved? Has the ABC become worse? What do you like about ABC TV? What would you change about ABC TV?

The survey showed there is broad audience recognition that *Catalyst* is both a distinctive and valuable brand for the ABC – but also many references to the recent editorial incidents. (See comments at [Attachment C<sup>4</sup>](#)).

## 2.7 ABC SCIENCE REFERENCE PANEL

The ABC Science Reference Panel reviewed research undertaken by the ABC and, in accordance with its Terms of Reference, prepared a report to the Board in August 2015.

While noting the high volume and quality of ABC Science content, the Panel identified a number of issues to be addressed in order to ensure that the Corporation's output was sustainable and provided an appropriate audience return on investment.

Overall, the Panel found that “the ABC performs very well in science content across all genres.”

It identified the following areas for improvement: Issues identified by the Panel included:

- the need to overcome divisional ‘silos’ and develop an ABC-wide strategy for science with goals that can be audited and assessed;
- the importance of succession planning and career paths for journalists who have a specialist knowledge in science;
- enhancing engagement between the ABC and the science community;
- the need for quality measures to complement ratings measures;
- raising the profile of science and health content with ABC news online; and
- more effective promotion of ABC science content to audiences.

In response to these issues, the Panel recommended a series of key initiatives:

- Developing and implementing an ABC-wide Science Strategy;
- Embedding a commitment to measuring quality;
- Engagement between the ABC and the scientific community;
- Developing a science marketing plan;
- Promoting Children's science content and maintaining ABC Splash; and
- Increasing the profile of science on ABC News.

## 2.8 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WITHIN THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

The Review undertook a series of interviews from inside and outside the ABC to seek feedback on the ABC's broadcasting of Science and in particular *Catalyst*.

Interviews took place with Norman Swan, Robyn Williams, Fiona Stanley, Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, Ian Chubb, Steve Simpson, Suzanne Cory, Jonathan Webb.

### 2.8.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY / STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS:

Detailed notes were taken during each of the interviews and subsequently verified with each respondent. Some of our contributors have asked for their specific comments to remain anonymous.

#### **The *Catalyst* brand**

There is a strong belief that *Catalyst* remains an important ABC brand that maintains its credibility and standing with both the audience and the scientific community. (See comments at [Attachment C<sup>5</sup>](#)).

#### **Editorial Issues**

Some stakeholders said that the show's problems can be linked directly to the recent editorial issues which do not reflect the overall quality or accuracy of the show. (See comments at [Attachment C<sup>6</sup>](#))

#### **Location of *Catalyst***

For those familiar with the inner workings of the ABC, there was a strong belief that *Catalyst* should be co-located with the ABC Science Unit to share knowledge, research and contacts and foster a higher degree of collaboration. (See comments at [Attachment C<sup>7</sup>](#)).

#### ***Catalyst* topics and subjects**

*Catalyst* is recognised as an important show as it raises the level of scientific literacy within the broader Australian population. (See comments at [Attachment C<sup>8</sup>](#)).

Its main audience is and should remain the general public – it is not a show made by scientists for scientists. (See comments at [Attachment C<sup>9</sup>](#)).

Most contributors would think the ABC should aspire to a show that could stand alongside the best in the world. Most stakeholders felt that *Catalyst* was too Australian centric and consequently not quite at that level yet. (See comments at [Attachment C<sup>10</sup>](#)).

The previous magazine format (three short stories within one program) was felt to be trivialising – although there was an appreciation that there were some important stories that did not justify a full episode. (See comments at [Attachment C<sup>11</sup>](#)).

Most saw the need for an adaptable format across broadcast and digital that allowed stories to be told at the appropriate length. TV for the big, long form scientific stories, with more bite sized shorter form stories being produced much more often and for digital. (See comments at [Attachment C<sup>12</sup>](#)).

*Catalyst* does well for gender diversity, with a balance of women presenters – but is still predominantly white and middle classed, whereas the broader scientific community is highly multicultural. (See comments at [Attachment C<sup>13</sup>](#)).

It was felt *Catalyst* needed a dedicated Executive Producer with journalistic and scientific credibility to help to maintain standards /quality control. (See comments at [Attachment C<sup>14</sup>](#)).



The feeling among representatives from the scientific community was that *Catalyst* should be unafraid of tackling contentious issues – but it is not its job to break news or interrogate. It should represent the evidence in a balanced way with all views placed in the appropriate context. Fringe scientific views need to be represented as such. (See comments at [Attachment C<sup>15</sup>](#)).

## 2.9 CONSULTATION WITH THE CATALYST TEAM:

To gauge the feelings of the current *Catalyst* production team, we asked them all to take part in an anonymous feedback session. Each member of the current production team was sent a questionnaire from Robert Barnfield (Insights Manager – Primary Research, ABC Audience & Marketing). No names were taken and the answers were filtered by Robert to uncover the consistent themes that were emerging.

The open ended questions are outlined below:

1. What episodes of *Catalyst* that you have worked on are you most proud of? Why?
2. Which episodes do you think we could have done better?
3. What do you like most about working on *Catalyst*?
4. What would you like to change about working on *Catalyst*?
5. If you were in charge of *Catalyst*, what would you do to make it the best show that it could be?
6. What shows from around the world would be the benchmark for *Catalyst*?

Feedback showed that the team feel under enormous pressure to deliver and perceive they have inadequate resources.

The key findings from consultation with the *Catalyst* team are summarised as:

- The *Catalyst* production team feel unsupported by management;
- Insufficient time, budget and resources are available – consequently, the current production schedule feels relentless and ridiculously tight;
- *Catalyst* needs a dedicated Executive Producer to maintain standards and quality control;
- The lack of an Executive Producer has led to last minute revisions and a rush to get to air;
- The current editing system is slow and frustrating causing delays;
- Consequently, more editing time is required – the current 12 day allocation is insufficient;
- Sharing ABC resources with external production community places too much pressure on the system;
- More international shoots are required to be present where the BIG science breakthroughs are happening;
- More collaboration with ABC Science was desirable; and
- Team morale is low.

### 3. The New *Catalyst*

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The Review recommends that the *Catalyst* program be restructured to ensure its relevance and sustainability in the years to come. A new *Catalyst* will aim to achieve larger and broader audiences, generate significant digital and social content and set a new benchmark for Science television in Australia.

#### 3.1 WHAT SHOULD A PREMIUM SCIENCE BRAND LOOK LIKE IN 2017 AND THE YEARS AHEAD?

In addressing the question “What should a premium science brand really look like in 2017 and the years ahead?” the Review found:

*Catalyst* can be among the best science programs in the world.

The new *Catalyst* should be ambitious, but also accessible. It should not just be a television program, but a one-hour, high quality documentary show, available on all platforms. An embedded digital and social content capability will take *Catalyst* content to audiences where they are and find new audiences who would not normally find the show on television.

*Catalyst* could unite ABC science across all divisions by working together. It should be co-located with the science team in the Radio division. It should be a driver of diversity on and off camera.

*Catalyst* would benefit from a new production approach. Presenters could be sourced from leading experts and science practitioners. A core internal ABC team of skilled specialists including a dedicated Executive Producer will be supported by the finest directors and camera operators in Australia.

A new look *Catalyst* should be capable of returning higher revenue to Television by tapping into global distribution opportunities for quality Science productions of one hour durations.

#### 3.2 THE NEW CATALYST

For the same net cost to the ABC, in 2017 *Catalyst* will:

- Transition the current half hour (x34 episodes) magazine-style program structure to a one-hour (x 17 episode) high quality documentary format which delivers high impact, single issue programs;
- Co-commission episodes with international partners, including BBC’s Horizon;
- Replace the ensemble presenting team with expert scientific talent assigned to each issue to ensure ongoing scientific rigour and credibility;
- Embed digital outcomes in the production to deliver short form content around each issue to increase the ABC’s digital science offering on and off ABC platform.

## Attachment A - Benchmarking international science shows.

### **Bang Goes the Theory (BBC One)**

Think science is boring? Don't let the show's host, Dallas Campbell, and panel of experts (including engineer Jem Stansfield, evolutionary biologist Dr. Yan Wong and biochemist Liz Bonnin) hear you say that.

The quartet takes a hands-on approach to science, performing experiments to test scientific theories. But these are bigger than the usual science experiments you performed in school. Among the crew's experiments are trying to blow up a brick house with a vortex cannon and attempting to break the land-speed record using a fire extinguisher and a go-kart.

Presented by: Liz Bonnin, Jem Stansfield, Dallas Campbell, Maggie Philbin  
Networks: BBC One, BBC HD

Normal series order: 8x30' twice per year (16 episodes per annum)

### **Horizon (BBC2)**

**Horizon** is an ongoing and long-running (since 1964) British documentary television series on BBC that covers science and philosophy.

- Horizon's mission statement is "The aim of Horizon is to provide a platform from which some of the world's greatest scientists and philosophers can communicate their curiosity, observations and reflections, and infuse into our common knowledge their changing views of the universe".
- *Horizon* continues to be broadcast on BBC Two, and in 2009 added a series of films based on the rich Horizon archive called *Horizon Guides* on BBC Four.
- To date, there have been 52 series and approximately 1,200 episodes produced.
- Current annual commission: 2 series of 7-8 x 60' (total 14-16 eps per annum)

### **Nova (PBS)**

**Nova** is an American popular science television series produced by WGBH Boston. It is broadcast on Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in the U.S., and in more than 100 other countries. The series has won many major television awards.

- To date there have been 43 seasons of Nova totalling just over 800 episodes
- Current annual commission: approx. 20x60' in two blocks of 10 episodes per year.

Today the range of topics covered by Nova is articulated as:

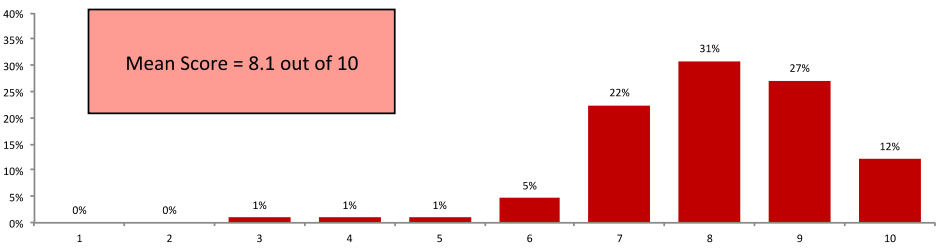
- Ancient Worlds
- Body & Brain
- Evolution
- Military & Espionage
- Nature
- Physics & Math
- Planet Earth
- Space & Flight
- Tech & Engineering

# Attachment B – Catalyst Research (Quality & Distinctiveness pilot) through YourSpace

## Overall Rating – “Smell, Our Most Underestimated Sense”

- Smell, Our Most Underestimated sense performed well scoring an average of 8.1 out of 10 among those surveyed.

“Could you please rate the episode of Catalyst that you watched this week with a mark out of 10, where 10 is the highest score? Please rate the program that you just viewed and not the program in general”



ABC Audience Insights

Watched Catalyst episode (Base: n=141)

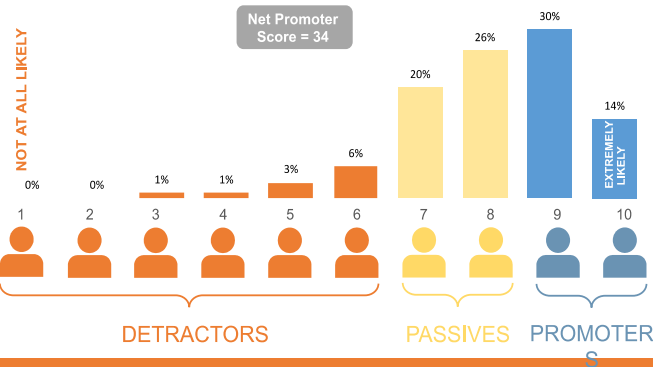
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## Net Promoter Score– “Smell, Our Most Underestimated Sense”

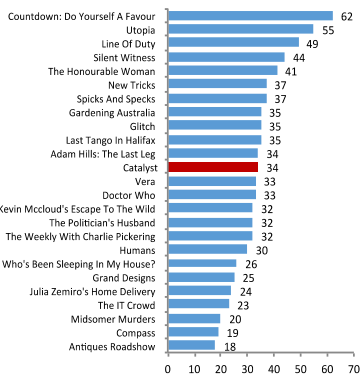
Smell, Our Most Underestimated Sense performed well, achieving a Net Promoter Score of 34.

This score is about average compared to ABC Shows researched in the 2015 Q&D Study

Q: On a scale from 1 to 10, how likely would you be to recommend the Catalyst episode you watched to friends or family ?



### Comparison Scores from 2015 Q&D Study



ABC Audience Insights

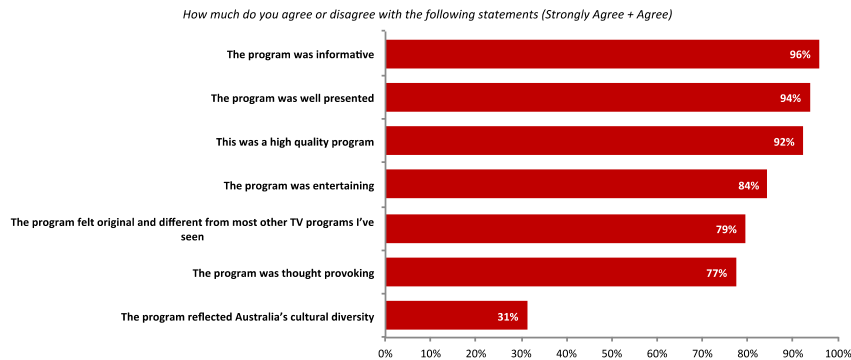
Watched Catalyst episode (Base: n=141)

3



## “Smell, Our Most Underestimated Sense”

- The program received a Quality score of 92%, and 79% for Distinctiveness.
- It's strengths were that it was informative (96%) and well presented (94%).
- It could do more to reflect Australia's cultural diversity, with only 31% agreement to that statement.



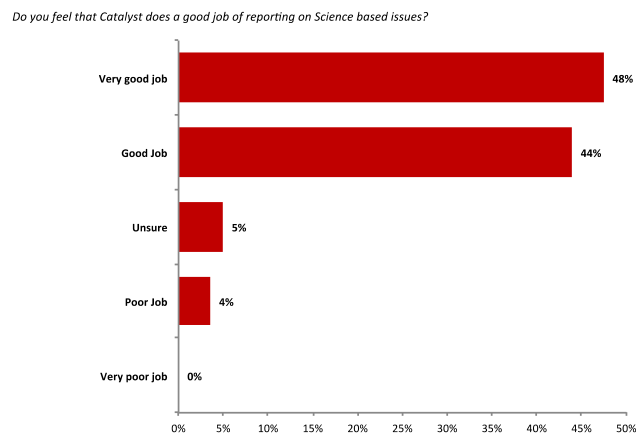
ABC Audience Insights

Watched Catalyst episode (Base: n=141)

4

## Do you feel that Catalyst does a good job of reporting on Science based issues?

The vast majority (92%) believe that Catalyst does a good job of reporting Science Based Issues.



ABC Audience Insights

Watched Catalyst episode (Base: n=141)

5

## Why does Catalyst do a very good job?

It treats serious scientific issues seriously. It is rarely frivolous. My only criticism is that it hasn't always had enough emphasis on the physical Universe.

I am not a science nerd .... no science background at all, but I love docos ... and this programme presents info in a way even I can get the point, even if I don't fully understand the detail. I learn stuff. What's not to like!!!

The program presents aspects of science in everyday life that are always informative and entertaining and can be surprising and thought provoking.

A wide range of topics are covered, very in depth segments. Lots of factual information, complex yet easy to understand, educational, helpful, amazing!

things I love to learn - science rocks If I wasn't an architect I would have loved to be a scientist

Always presents interesting new information on science and medical issues that I find amazing while always presenting both sides of an issue. All presenters put the story first. I especially liked the liked the stories on statins and feel the ABC management failed to protect the journalists from minority interests.

I know nothing about science but Catalyst always seems to be interesting and informative.

Most episodes are informative; some are very informative and not only well presented, but enjoyable. A small percentage are less so, containing information which is already well known and the program somewhat contrived. On the whole, it is one program the family and I try hard not to miss. It is one of the best things the ABC does.

Because I sense that the ABC adheres to the current prevailing scientific views, and is largely free from influence from the pressures of commercial interest, and I am re-assured that measures are taken to uphold the integrity of the program is when such incidents of this nature occur. as has happened in the recent past. :)

a good attempt to present complicated facts to non-scientists without dumbing down or sensationalizing.

Good breadth of subjects, usually well researched and typically well reported. Unfortunately, there are some episodes where, when giving the 'alternate view', this low acceptance view is given too much exposure.

I find it to be well-researched in general, interesting and good at explaining complex concepts in an informal way, although there have been issues with some recent programs that were not a balanced view and did not disclose the bias. It's important to ensure that this doesn't happen because the program has a reputation to be maintained and a position as the ABC's flagship science program that could be damaged.

The science is well explained, the subject matter is always interesting.

It's well researched as is evident in the content of the programme. It's always interesting and diverse in the topics covered.

ABC Audience Insights

6

## Why does Catalyst do a good job?

It covers topics not obviously/readily in the general public's mind I think.

For a start it does not have much to beat, being about the only program in this area. Mostly it has an acceptable balance of information and entertainment. My personal preference would be to drop some of the purely 'entertaining' content and add more science.

generally its ok but there have been a couple of recent programmes that have been ridiculous .ie, statins and mobile phones!

I regard CATALYST as a program that presents Science for viewers, who may not all be SCIENCE ORIENTED. As such, I think it does a pretty good job, most of the time. Occasionally, it goes off at a tangent and gets tangled up with propaganda, which is out of place in a science based program

Catalyst has a wide range of subject matter given the broad scientific world we live in. Oddly Foreign Correspondent also had an animal story. The human senses though in Catalyst was excellent as it pertained more toward our lives and how important being able to smell can be. I like programs that focus on bodies.

The program covers a diverse field of science and explains it well, for me I love the information and it stimulates my grey matter

Speaking of tonight's episode, both sides of the issue were well and clearly presented, which allowed the viewer to make a valued judgement of where they stand. When it comes time to make a decision on the issue, voters will be better informed, thanks to tonight's program.

Mostly they present really interesting facts and information, but sometimes they get the information wrong.

I found today's program very hard to engage with. It was less relevant to me than many of the other programs and I lost interest, even though I had a nose cancer and sometimes lose my sense of smell, I just did not relate to it and lost focus and interest. Unusual for me to have this reaction.

It has a diverse range of subject and is usually very informative but there have been controversial messages given that could possibly have negative impact on people's health if we are to believe the feedback.

because it often contains information that is new and not reported elsewhere or it reports more deeply on something that has hit the headlines in the tabloids; sometimes it gets sidetracked into more trivial science.

ABC Audience Insights

7

## Why does Catalyst do a poor job?

Presentation appears to be aimed at the lowest common denominator. Seems to assume a concentration span of a few minutes. Maybe trying to appeal to a younger not traditional ABC audience. Has been severely criticised in the past for misleading or false stories.

Too much frippery (shallow coverage of issues more suitable for a commercial channel); too much party political/PC approach to issues; too much one-sided treatment of contentious issues; too willing to listen to outlier views

It is reminiscent of programmes I watched when at school, implying the audience has no scientific knowledge whatsoever. Whether the presenters are bad at expressing themselves, or am incredibly knowledgeable about science, I find Catalyst rather slow. Previous science programmes, eg, Towards 2000, Beyond 2000 plus others, I feel outweighed Catalyst by several degrees - I can't explain why - my age, the presenters' age then compared to now perhaps - just a wild guess.

Some programs have been very controversial and could cause people to ignore medical advice. Producers must remember that each person may have complex medical issues that need to be treated by a well trained professional who is across all these issues.

Recent controversial episodes that featured junk science (ie wifi and statins stories) have damaged the Catalyst brand. Every time I watch it now I'm wondering how rigorous the editorial process has been to produce the latest episode. Demasi has damaged the program's reputation - and probably for good sadly. I would suggest the ABC rebrand for a new science program with more strenuous checks and balances before broadcast.

Often feels lightweight and not vigorously scientific. I would prefer the program to be meatier, more certain.

They cover a very narrow range of subjects, mainly health and astrophysics which are clearly the interests of the presenters. There is not enough factual information and too much of the "human interest aspect". The coverage is too superficial - most people with any interest in or knowledge of science would already know what was presented on the small episode.

Several programs in the past have mixed pseudo-science with real science, reducing the credibility of the program

ABC Audience Insights

82

## What do they like about Catalyst?

I like the different presenters, who all seem to have specialties, so they are interested in, and enthusiastic about the subject, which makes it more interesting for the viewer.

I enjoy seeing something other than cooking, crime and romance. People need intellectual stimulus and Catalyst provides this. Catalyst, Q & A and Gardening Australia (and Landline) are the best shows on the ABC and indeed on TV in general.

I like the presenters and I like that it makes the topics accessible to me. I like that it is often about healthy living.

The level of presentation strikes a good balance between over-simplification and excessive technicality.

I usually become engaged with a topic I would otherwise be unaware of or ignore

In the most part I find the subject matter intriguing as I have a wide scientific knowledge (worked as Pharmacist for over 50 years) and it still amazes me there is so much 'new stuff' to get my brain around. CATALYST as well as the LANDLINE to be programs of the highest quality that I have suggested to some overseas friends to look for on iView.

Good format.... and even though I understand I am (necessarily) being talked down to .... the programme doesn't present as tabloid TV. I'm even prepared to engage my brain at the occasional dud. (You know which presenter I mean.) I thought the use of a dog as a prop was a great way to get the notions of "smell" across to the great unwashed. Too cute. And I learnt stuff, too!

Factual, scientific, believable, trustworthy, honest, proof is always provided. And it is the ABC!

I enjoy the cutting edge technology that it brings to awareness. I doubt I would otherwise hear about most stories anywhere else. It has been a favorite show of mine for many years

In the long term, very good, scientific and interesting. Been a few goofs in the last couple of years, which shouldn't have happened. Hobby-horses are often taken for a ride.

I love being surprised by the topic chosen for that episode and gaining new insights and understandings about the world of science.

The information, the controversy, the expanding of my understanding of scientific topics

It's an interesting programme about the latest research in science. The anchor man is good looking too!!

It's interesting, informative and often tackles unexpected subjects. There is not much else like it for those interested in science and trends in scientific research.

The most important part is that science in Australia is seeing a downturn in funding from state and federal governments. It is my futile hope that catalyst will increase interest in one of the essential aspects of study and hopefully increase interest in youth to work in this area.

Informative and investigative. My respect for the show started after watching the one on low carb, high fat diets. Most media were still on the low fat bandwagon, but you didn't shy away from exploring the evidence against it. Would love more shows like that - that most media are too "stuck" to explore.

ABC Audience Insights

92



## What would they change about Catalyst?

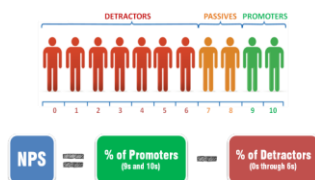


## Net Promoter Score Explained

The Net Promoter Score is calculated based on responses to a single question:

*"How likely is it that you would recommend our company/product/service to a friend or colleague?"*

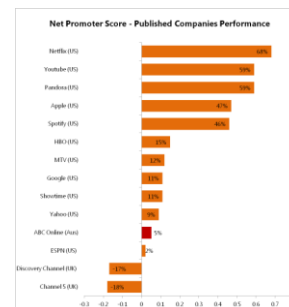
The scoring for this answer is based on a 0 to 10 scale. Those who respond with a score of 9 - 10 are called Promoters, and are considered likely to exhibit value-creating behaviours, such as buying more, remaining customers for longer, and making more positive referrals to other potential customers. Those who respond with a score of 0 to 6 are labelled Detractors, and they are believed to be less likely to exhibit the value-creating behaviours. Responses of 7 and 8 are labelled Passives, and their behaviour falls in the middle of Promoters and Detractors.



The Net Promoter Score is calculated by subtracting the percentage of customers who are Detractors from the percentage of customers who are Promoters. For purposes of calculating a Net Promoter Score, Passives count towards the total number of respondents, but do not directly affect the overall net score.

Net Promoter Scores can be compared across businesses, and improvements measured over time. It is more important to measure improvements in scores or scores within the ABC (as they build) as sample definitions will vary across different businesses.

A comparison of similar businesses to the ABC shows the top tier of NPS Scores are 40+.



## Attachment C – Stakeholder comments

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<sup>1</sup> *“(Catalyst) does not have much to beat, being about the only program in this area.”*

*“it often contains information that is new and not reported elsewhere or it reports more deeply on something that has hit the headlines in the tabloids”*

*“The most important part is that science in Australia is seeing a downturn in funding from state and federal governments. It is my futile hope that Catalyst will increase interest in one of the essential aspects of study and hopefully increase interest in youth to work in this area. “*

<sup>2</sup> *“I enjoy the cutting edge technology that it brings to awareness. I doubt I would otherwise hear about most stories anywhere else. It has been a favorite show of mine for many years “*

<sup>3</sup> *“while keeping things simple for a general audience don't be afraid to get a little technical”*

<sup>4</sup> *“They have not played follow my leader with the Free to air channels. I believe the ABC accepts intelligent viewers due to the quality of Doco's and the Q&A, Catalyst type programmes.” (70+ yrs)*

*“There just seems to be content that I am interested in and I appreciate the different modes of delivery. The new dramas are great. A far cry from the dark days of J. Shire. The only downer is the demise of Catalyst through the dubious effort of Dr.Demasi.” (60-64 yrs)*

*“The informative and unbiased news, along with the excellent science documentaries such as Catalyst.” (18 -24yrs)*

*“I like smart TV. TV where I can learn something, be challenged and be aware of the world that I live in. The ABC provides that with Gruen, Media Watch, Checkout, Catalyst, Landline, Four Corners ....” (45 – 49yrs)*

*“Love the news and current affairs and the Australian drama. Love media watch Love Catalyst too but very concerned about recent issues there.” (35 – 39yrs)*

*“Get rid of Catalyst and have an interesting and objective science program.” (30 – 34 yrs)*

*“Everything but Catalyst”(14 – 17 yrs)*

<sup>5</sup> *“Catalyst should retain its name – it is a good brand now and it is not damaged by the current controversy” - Fiona Stanley, former ABC Board member and Chair of the Science Reference Panel*

*“Scientists still get a buzz when they are asked to participate in an episode of Catalyst – and tend to say yes” - Professor Stephen Simpson, Academic Director of the Charles Perkins Centre, Sydney University*

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*"The Catalyst brand has longevity – we should keep it and make the best use of it" - Jonathan Webb – Radio National Director of Content, Science & Health*

*"Catalyst should aim to be the premier source of science journalism on Australian Television" - Norman Swan – Producer and Presenter of The Health Report, Radio National*

*"There is little wrong with Catalyst at the moment that could not easily be fixed" - Robyn Williams*

*<sup>6</sup> "With the exception of Maryanne's stories (wi-fried & statins there has not been a problem with Catalyst's quality or accuracy" - Robyn Williams*

*"Catalyst's storytelling is bloody good – again with two notable exceptions (wi-fried & statins)" – Fiona Stanley*

*<sup>7</sup> "The biggest problem that needs to be addressed is that Catalyst should be co-located with the rest of ABC Science (as recommended by the Science Review). This would allow them to utilise the expertise from within the organisation to make shows better and more efficiently. We need to overcome silos within the ABC to fully utilise the expertise there" - Fiona Stanley*

*"In an ideal world, the science unit, Catalyst and News would work together and share stories and cross promote each other's work" - Jonathan Webb – Radio National*

*"Geographically, Catalyst should be part of the ABC Science community to fully utilise all of the resources and research that is readily available... we have the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest broadcasting science units in the world (after the BBC)" Norman Swan*

*<sup>8</sup> "Catalyst's main aim should be to educate the general public. Explaining complicated issues and concepts in a broadly understandable way" - Professor Ian Chubb, former Chief Scientist of Australia*

*<sup>9</sup> "Catalyst should be for all Australians and explain how science is impacting on their world." - Norman Swan – Health report*

*<sup>10</sup> "Internationally, it (Catalyst) is a 2<sup>nd</sup> tier show behind the likes of Horizon and Equinox (BBC)" - Professor Stephen Simpson*

*The magazine version of the show is hard to sell to international broadcasters – who are gravitating towards longer 60 minute documentaries (like Horizon and Nova)... Huge opportunity to bring global science to a local audience" - Fiona Stanley*

*<sup>11</sup> "The magazine format of Catalyst had become rather tired – and no subjects were given enough time to be covered well or in depth" - Professor Stephen Simpson*

*<sup>12</sup> "Catalyst needs a highly produced TV version, but also needs a digital presence... look at the success of the cancer story that went viral and attracted millions of views" - Robyn Williams*

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<sup>13</sup> *“Bring in external presenters to make a quick impact as specialist hosts for specialist topics. There are loads of talented aboriginal scientists (PhDs) coming through that we should be paying special attention to”* - Fiona Stanley

<sup>14</sup> *“The show (Catalyst) needs an Exec Producer with authority (like 4 Corners) who has journalistic experience and a scientific background”* - Norman Swan

<sup>15</sup> *“People need to be aware that contested science can still be good science as long as it is placed in the correct context, stands up to peer scrutiny and is presented in a balanced way”* - Professor Ian Chubb

*“Catalyst should handle subjects of a contentious nature BUT it should not be looking to uncover scandals. We have other shows that specialise in that and have the journalistic rigour. In a collaborative One ABC, then if we suspect a scandal then we should hand the story over to 4 Corners”* - Jonathan Webb – Radio National

*We should not shy away from contentious subjects. They should be tackled honestly and fearlessly – even if they challenge our own views. But, they must be balanced in their treatment – and we must consult widely.”* - Fiona Stanley